Iraq
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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY WOLF JR May 18, 1993 5/25/82
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TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
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SUBJECT: Iraq

PLACE: Residence of Saleh Jabr

PARTICIPANTS:

United States

Honorable Henry A. BYROADE,
Assistant Secretary of State
for Near Eastern, South Asian
and African Affairs
Honorable Douglas MacARTHUR II,
State Department Counselor

Iraq

Senator Saleh JABR,
leader of the dissolved
Umma Party
Mr. J. R. BARROW,
American Embassy

Saleh Jabr dwelt at some length on the theme that the visit of Secretary Dulles and his colleagues was too brief. The Secretary, having come all this way, should have stayed longer and taken the opportunity to meet more of the Iraqi people from all walks of life.

Mr. MacArthur noted that the Secretary had heavy commitments in the US, particularly in defending foreign aid programs before the Congress. This trip, although admittedly brief, had nevertheless given the Secretary the opportunity to lay aside the daily distractions of his office and focus his entire attention on each country for 24 hours, learning about problems at first-hand from the leaders themselves.

Jabr then spoke with great force and conviction from a prepared outline about steps which he felt the US must take to help in solving both the external and internal problems of the countries of the Middle East:

I. EXTERNAL PROBLEMS

Jabr thought it essential that the US bring its influence to bear, in a reasonable way, on the UK and France to change their policies and methods in dealing with the Middle East countries. He said that it must be accepted as a cardinal principle that imperialism should be eradicated forever. He said the US ought to insure that the UK and France "behave" in Egypt and North Africa respectively.

Mr. Byroade

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Mr. Byroade said that giving the UK and France the benefit of our views on these problems was virtually a daily preoccupation of the State Department. However, to display our differences in public would only play into Soviet hands. On this point Jabr agreed.

With respect to the Egyptian situation, Mr. Byroade said he wished to explain briefly the problem involved. He said there was a great deal of misunderstanding about the Suez base and the way in which it must be utilized in order to be an effective base. The base and the installations and equipment therein were intended not only for the defense of Egypt but for the defense of the region as a whole. If the base were not properly and efficiently maintained, it would be valueless. This in turn would not only weaken the defenses of Egypt, it would weaken the defenses of the entire Middle East, and by extension the whole free world. It was vital, therefore, to insure (a) that the base was properly maintained and (b) that the British equipment located therein would be available for use not only in Egypt but also elsewhere in the Middle East if needed.

Mr. Byroade further said that the British were agreed in principle to withdrawal from the base, which fact alone would give General Naguib a tremendous victory. It appeared, however, that the Egyptians insisted upon 100% of their demands. He thought the real difficulty was that there was no mutual trust between the Egyptians and the British.

Saleh Jabr agreed with Mr. Byroade that it was vital to all the countries of the Middle East that the Suez base be properly and efficiently maintained. He said the Americans should draw the Egyptians aside, without the British present, and explain to them frankly the reasons they are unable to maintain the base properly. He thought if the problems were explained to the Egyptians in a logical, reasonable way they would modify their position.

He further agreed that the lack of mutual trust was the heart of the difficulty but believed such trust could only be created if the British would make some small "facilities" (presumably he meant "concessions") to the Egyptians. He said that statements like the recent one made by Mr. Churchill in Commons only made the Egyptians furious and more intransigent.

Mr. Byroade said that Saleh Jabr could be assured that we had been working very hard in trying to persuade both sides toward modification.

Mr. MacArthur

Mr. MacArthur told Salah Jabr that the Secretary had spoken very fr[illegible] to the French on North African questions when last in Paris and that we were continuing to do our utmost to bring about a moderate and reasonable solution to these questions.

II. MIDDLE EAST DEFENSE

Jabr said that if we could only help the UK and France to liquidate their difficulties in this part of the world, he saw no insuperable obstacles to the establishment of an effective system of Middle East defense. He said that it was a foregone conclusion that no defense system would be effective without Western participation. He said that the West would no doubt need not only the Suez base but bases closer to the Soviet frontiers as well. He said that the defense system must embrace not only the Arab States but other Middle Eastern States, such as Iran, India, Pakistan, Turkey and perhaps Greece. He strongly rejected the notion that the Arab Collective Security Pact was or could ever be an effective instrument for Middle East defense, irrespective of Western support. He thought defense of the Middle East must be more broadly based.

During the discussion Jabr continually referred to the Soviet Union as "our common enemy". He said there was no reason to fear Communism in Iraq but noted that many actions of the West, such as Churchill's statement, played into Communist hands.

III. INTERNAL PROBLEMS

Jabr referred to the internal problems of the Middle Eastern countries which, he said, also must be resolved if the Middle East is to be strong and stable. He said he strongly believed Iraq must cooperate with the British as well as the Americans. He in fact had negotiated a Treaty with the British when Prime Minister in 1948. He also believed in maintaining the monarchy here. However, the UK was influencing the Palace to perpetuate a reactionary political regime. He said that prior to the January elections the British Embassy, under pressure from certain British commercial companies who felt their private interests were at stake, had persuaded the Regent against holding impartial elections. The Regent had accordingly given his military Prime Minister (Nurrudin Mahmoud) a list of deputies to be "appointed" to Parliament. He said the Regent would never have acted in this manner had he not been advised to do so by the British Embassy. He said that he had told both the Regent and the British Ambassador that they were making a

great

great mistake, that the elections should be conducted impartially so that the ensuing Government would have a popular base. If the existing group in power had been successful under those conditions, his party would have been the first to offer congratulations to the victors. The people would have had the feeling that they had been able to express their choice and their confidence in the Government would have been enhanced. He said that the US should explain to the British that they should look beyond the selfish and short-sighted interest of their commercial companies and allow the Palace to act impartially in the interest of leading Iraq toward a democratic and stable regime.

IV. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Jabr then turned to the subject of economic development. He said economic improvements must be brought about rapidly to relieve the suffering of the impoverished. He said Iraq did not require a single penny of US money to carry out development. What it needed was technicians, more technicians than at present. He said the US need not pay for these technicians; Iraq was fully able to employ these experts. US help was needed simply in recruiting and despatching experts of the highest possible caliber.

V. PALESTINE

Jabr did not mention Palestine until Messrs. Byroade, MacArthur and Barrow were about to leave and then did so almost as an afterthought. He said he thought implementation of the UN resolutions was the minimum basis upon which the Arabs now would accept a settlement with Israel. He admitted that the Arabs had been at fault for not originally accepting the resolutions, but he thought if the Western powers would now implement those resolutions the Arabs would accept. He said he realized, however, that this might not be easy. If the Western powers were not in a position to implement these resolutions now they should lay the Palestine problem to one side and pursue more urgent matters of which, he felt, settlement of the Egyptian problem and Middle East defense were foremost.